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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001705

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: TRYING TO MOVE THE PEACE PROCESS FORWARD:
AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT KUMARATUNGA

Classified By: AMB. JEFFREY J. LUNSTEAD. REASON: 1.4 (B,D).

SUMMARY

11. (C) Ambassador met President Kumaratunga one-on-one October 13. The President was grateful for US support on the peace process. She believes renewed efforts to curtail Tiger funding would be valuable. She suggested the US might want to talk to the Tigers directly to make sure they get our message. She thinks the UNP might still join her National Advisory Council on Peace and Reconciliation. She thinks she has the JVP under control. END SUMMARY

UNGA Events

12. (C) I called on President Kumaratunga evening of October 13. Kumaratunga hustled into the meeting room shortly after 7:00 for our 6:00 appointment. (Since the Cabinet meets Wednesdays at 7:00, this meant she was now keeping them waiting.) The visibly-tired President apologized for being late, then launched into a description of her time in New York at the UNGA. She mentioned that she had been seated along with President Bush at Secretary General Annan's table at his dinner, but had been unable, because of the setting, to exchange more than a few pleasantries. She said she had also had a chance to speak briefly to Secretary Powell at the President's reception, and at more length to U/S Grossman and A/S Rocca.

13. (C) Kumaratunga continued that she was sure Foreign Minister Kadirgamar had told me about his meeting in Washington with Deputy Secretary Armitage, which had gone well. She said that she was especially pleased with the statement which the Department had issued after that meeting.

How to Tame the Tigers?

14. (C) I told her that I had met the Deputy Secretary when I was in DC in August, and that our interest in seeing progress in Sri Lanka remained steady, as shown in our statements. The question, I said, was how to move things forward. It was especially hard to find ways to leverage the Tigers. The Tigers were coming under increasing pressure now, as many of the Europeans, who had earlier taken a softer line, were now being much more tough with the Tigers as a result of the continuing Tiger murders of their opponents. The Tigers were hearing this, I told her, during their current European tour. We were looking at additional ways to motivate them, including through contacts with their expatriate advisers, and in seeing if there were additional ways to cut off their outside funding. Kumaratunga thought these were both excellent ideas, especially working on their funding. They have no state sponsor, she said; they depend entirely on outside funding.

15. (C) I told Kumaratunga that we continued to try to send a two-fold message to the Tigers. The first part was that their behavior was unacceptable and had to change, and that until it changed there could be no change in the designation of the LTTE as a terrorist organization. The second part was that if their behavior did change, our attitude could also change. I said that we tried to see that the Tigers received this message, but that we had no direct contact with them, as a matter of policy. Kumaratunga spontaneously interjected: "Why don't you send one of your people to see Tamilchelvam while he is Europe?" I told her this was an interesting idea, but that such a meeting could be easily misinterpreted. She said she understood that, but added that in her experience the Tigers were very good at keeping confidences.

Government Efforts

16. (C) I then asked Kumaratunga how things were going from the Government side. What did she think had resulted from her convening of the National Advisory Council on Peace and Reconciliation on October 4? She replied that she thought the inaugural National Advisory Council (NAC) meeting had gone well. She was, of course, disappointed that the Tamil

National Alliance and the UNP had not participated. She had heard, however, that there was considerable feeling in UNP ranks that UNP leader Ranil Wickremasinghe had made a mistake in not attending. The NAC would now break into three smaller groups--political, religious and civil society--and hold meetings at that level. She would send invitations to all the parties to participate in the political sub-group. I told her that we also had the impression that many people felt the UNP had erred in not attending the NAC, and hoped that she could allow Wickremasinghe a face-saving way to opt back in, if he wished to do so. She said that the exchanges between herself and Wickremasinghe on this subject had so far been cordial, and that she would try to keep it that way. I encouraged her to do so. I told her we would encourage Wickremasinghe and the UNP to be supportive of the peace process. (I will see UNP Deputy Leader Karu Jayasuriya on Monday and make this point.)

17. (C) On the question of resuming talks, Kumaratunga said that she believed she had made a significant gesture to the LTTE in her opening statement at the NAC, when she said that her government accepted the necessity to set up an Interim Administration, but would require a commitment from the LTTE that the Interim Administration as well as any final settlement would be based on the Oslo Declaration which said that a federal solution should be sought within a united Sri Lanka. She did not see why the LTTE could not agree to this as they had signed on to Oslo already. She added that she had received word from the Norwegians that in the recent LTTE meeting with Vidar Helgesen, Tamilchelvan had indicated the LTTE might be able to show some flexibility on the agenda for the talks--perhaps a result of the hard message they were receiving from the Europeans.

18. (C) What about the JVP, I asked the President? Could she get them to go along with her ideas? She said that she believed the NAC offered the JVP a face-saving way to go along with negotiations. The issue of peace had been the most difficult when the SLFP was negotiating its alliance with the JVP last year. The SLFP wanted to accept federalism; the JVP was only able to go as far as power-sharing at the local level. They had papered over this difference when the JVP accepted a formulation that they would accept whatever received the backing of the majority of Sri Lankans. She was sure she could persuade the majority to support a federal solution. Now that they are in government, she said, the JVP are beginning to realize the need for compromise.

19. (C) I told the President that we supported her efforts to resume the peace talks, and that we, and the rest of the international community, had always been clear that any solution must not harm the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. She should keep that in mind, I said, because it was a type of support which could allow her to take some bold steps. She responded that she greatly appreciated our support.

COMMENT

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10. (C) The President said she was still jet-lagged from her trip to the US, waking up at 2 or 3 in the morning, and was visibly fatigued--with a several-hour Cabinet meeting still to come. She is clearly still hunting for that so-far elusive formula which will allow the peace talks to restart, while not appearing to give in totally to the Tiger demands. As noted above, we will continue to talk to the UNP and urge them to support the process. We agree with the President that working on curtailing the Tigers, overseas funding is a good idea. We will explore this at greater length in an additional message.

LUNSTEAD